

BMVdigest

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Tesaṃ ditthipahānattham - iddhiṃ dassahi gotami.

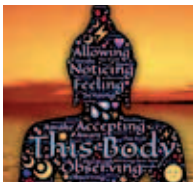
Perform a supernatural feat, Gotami in order to dispel doubts about women's full realization of Dhamma.

Inside:



Where Have You Come From and Where Are You Going

The Buddha's love and compassion was unlimited. For the benefit of one poor girl and her father, he twice went on a long journey to teach the Dhamma, and he did not forget about the girl after the first visit, but returned as soon as he knew that she needed his help. Though he had many thousands of disciples including kings and ministers, and also taught celestial beings, the Buddha always had time for anyone who would benefit from his teaching, even including beggars and slaves. **4-7**



Finding Sense in Sensation

Buddha was the foremost scientist of mind and matter

(*nama and rupa*). What makes him a peerless scientist is his discovery that *tanha*, or craving, and by extension, aversion—arises from *vedana*, or sensation on the body. **7**



When you are on Retreat

When you are on retreat, restrictions are placed on your

physical actions and speech. But there are also mental restraints and limitations. You are not to simply let your mind go wild or indulge in fantasies. Instead, you are to learn to bring the mind into the present. **16**



BREAK FREE
HOW TO
ABSOLUTELY
END COMPARING
YOURSELF
TO OTHERS

Is Mine Bigger than Yours

Charles Johnson explores our endless capacity to compare ourselves to others, and the Buddha's antidote to trying to measure up. It is the kind of thinking we do when we wonder, whether to ourselves or out loud, 'Is mine bigger than yours? Is mine as good as yours?' **18**



Kathina Now and Then



PHOTO NEWS

*Kathina Ceremony at BMV on
20th October 2019 @ 7.30am*

Sabbadānam Dhammadānam Jināti ~ The Gift of Dhamma excels all other Gifts

KATHINA CELEBRATIONS AT BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

Kathina ceremonies were held at the Brickfields Buddhist Temple since pre-war days. Unfortunately there are no records available of such ceremonies for the period up to 1950.

It may be recalled that Ven. Patthalagedera Dhammananda Maha Thera, the first incumbent Bhikkhu of the Brickfields Buddhist Temple, in his letter to the Editor of *Lakmini Pahana* in Ceylon on 15 July 1895, did mention his intention to observe the Vassana season (rains retreat) in Kuala Lumpur. This would indicate that he and his pupil Ven. Godagama Sobhita Thera both observed the *Vassana* period together in Kuala Lumpur in 1895.

The earliest post-war record available of *Vassana* at the Brickfields Buddhist Temple is that contained in the Annual Report of the Society for 1950:

The Vassana period in 1950 commenced on 29 July 1950, the day after the arrival of Ven M. Pannasiri Thera at the temple. Throughout this period of three months, Bana preaching was conducted by the Bhikkhu every evening without a break. The Vassana ceremony was observed on two successive full moon days. This was due to the Chinese Buddhists who being inspired by the preceding ceremonies of the occasion held at the end of the Vassana period, expressed their wish to make offerings in a similar manner, on the following full moon day. This ceremony was sponsored by Yeoh Cheng Hock, Secretary of the Selangor Buddhist Association. On this occasion, Ven Pannasiri Thera, after explaining the significance of the occasion, gave a sermon on Buddhism in English.



The Sasana Society appreciated the initiative taken by its Ladies Section to go round for subscriptions towards the Vassana Pinkama independently. This was the first time, in the history of the Society, that the lady members had taken such great interest on this important celebration.

In the order of the eight meritorious offerings as advocated by the Buddha, the offering of the *Kathina Cheevera* takes precedence. In following this age old tradition, the *Kathina Cheevera* with all other offerings to the Triple Gem would ceremoniously be taken from the main gate of the Temple and offered to the Maha Sangha at 7.00 am. At noon on the same day, Sanghika Dana would be offered to the Maha Sangha. Many devotees would bring their vegetarian food to offer to the Maha Sangha.



In the evening, Gilampasa Buddha Puja (offering of flowers, joss-sticks, etc) would be held followed by a blessing service. A sermon on the significance of Kathina would be delivered by the monk wearing the *Kathina Cheevera*, having fulfilled the rules of the Vassana (rains retreat).

From the Society records, senior male members were given the honour of carrying the *Kathina Cheevera* robe. The tradition continued till 2008 when the Management Committee decided to give this honour to the senior female members.

Source:-

100 years of the Buddhist Maha Vihara (1895 – 1995)
by Mr H.M.A. de Silva

Prepared and compiled by Pamela Jayawardena

| FEATURE

SIGNIFICANCE OF KATHINA CELEBRATIONS

by Venerable Sudhamma Bhikkhuni

Religions around the world celebrate their many holy days, although few can with any accuracy be traced back to a particular date, and fewer still can be traced back to instructions from the religion's founder. However, the Kathina celebration, one of the two most vital Buddhist holy days, differs on both counts.

Seasons of India are winter, summer, and rainy season. The Buddha required his bhikkhus and bhikkhunis (male and female monks) to spend three of the four months of rainy season staying put in a residence, not traveling around casually. The rains being a rich time of growth of plants and new life, lay people had complained that the Buddha's monks traveling around in rainy season were harming too many tender crops and small creatures. The Buddha therefore instituted this three-month Vassa rainy-season residency, starting from the full moon of July, during which time monks generally cannot travel away overnight, except briefly for urgent matters (returning within 7 days).

Each year, the Vassa brings a rich treasure-trove of traditions supportive to the holy life (brahmacariya), culminating in the uplifting Kathina celebration. The Vassa provides a period of stable residency – important for stable community life among the Sangha, intensive learning, or for intensive meditation. Vassa shapes the rhythm of the lives of Sangha members. Monks must calculate any travels in advance to be sure to arrive at a chosen Vassa residency by the

necessary date, and must refuse temptations to travel unnecessarily during Vassa. Laity depend upon Vassa as a time they can count upon the steady presence of monks, particularly any learned monks whom they have the good fortune to support.



The revered Kathina Cheevera held high on a beautiful tray.

Monks commonly dedicate the Vassa period for undertaking special good practices, such as doing intensive meditation, keeping extra discipline, or fulfilling special goals, such as memorizing the Patimokkha. The scriptures give many stories of monks becoming fully enlightened while dedicated to meditation during Vassa. The passing of another Vassa should add urgency to a monk's efforts to attain the goal of the holy life. Monks often plan their Vassa residence far in advance, and never forget where they spent each Vassa. Seniority in the Sangha is even reckoned in terms of Vassa numbers; on meeting, monks ask each other, "How many Vassa?" meaning "How long have you been a monk?" to determine who is senior and who serves in the junior role.

Although monks may spend some Vassa periods in isolation pursuing intensive meditation, the majority stay in groups, and since no one can escape once Vassa has begun, those who would prefer to be solitary wanderers must eventually develop the social skills necessary to get along with each other. The end of Vassa brings a sense of happy relief for those travelling on missionary purpose, and perhaps sorrow for those who will miss their teachers and friends.

According to scripture, on one occasion, thirty monks from another kingdom tried to arrive at the Buddha's monastery in Savatthi in time to enjoy the blessing of spending the three-month Vassa in the Buddha's company. To their sorrow, they didn't get to him before the Vassa began, and had to take up residence six yojanas away (approximately 50 miles). As soon as the Vassa restriction ended, they made their way to the Buddha, not waiting for the season's torrential rains to diminish. Crossing swollen rivers and making their way in the rain and mud, the group arrived in shabby condition, weary, with drenched robes. We can assume that their robes, already threadbare from wear during the rainy season, were ruined by arduous travel in pouring rain.

Looking with compassion at these devoted but bedraggled monks, the Buddha gave a discourse on the incalculable length of the arduous journey in Samsara. Then he announced a new holiday to occur after Vassa: Kathina, an occasion of cloth-giving by laity. It is also a day of robe-making by the monks, for the Buddha added excitement to the occasion by requiring the Sangha to meet a challenge: they have less than 24 hours to make a robe from scratch. The name for the occasion, "Kathina," which comes from the word for the wooden frame (like a quilting frame) used to hold a robe being sewn.



Devotees offering robes and other requisites on Kathina day.

The Kathina-challenge clock starts running at dawn, but efforts cannot begin until new white cloth sufficient for a robe has been ceremoniously received from a donor. (The monks cannot ask in advance for the robe cloth, nor even hint about it; the cloth must come to them as though it has fallen down from the sky. The lay supporters do not let them down, however.) There must be at least five monks for the ceremony, hence monks from different locations may join to make a quorum. After receiving the cloth, the Sangha chooses a worthy recipient: a monk who kept unbroken residence for the Rains and who knows what to do, preferably an elder monk needing a new robe.

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The cloth recipient must now quickly organize a team that will wash the white cloth, dry it, measure, mark and cut it into the complicated pattern of monks' robes, sew the patches into a robe, dye it repeatedly, rinse and finally dry it, thus successfully making a ready-to-wear finished robe; then the recipient must relinquish his or her old robe, mark the new one, and announce, "the Kathina is spread," then show it to another monk who must approve ("rejoice in") the completed robe – all before dawn of the following morning!

The effort requires community cooperation, with some monks spending hours boiling jackfruit bark for dyeing the robes, while others work in shifts on the other robe-making tasks. Meanwhile, learned monks may give talks to the gathered lay devotees. Junior monks and novices may watch the work to learn and give minor support, or bring refreshments to the workers. According to their numbers and level of skill, monks may attempt making merely an under-robe, which is the smallest and easiest to complete; or the medium-challenge upper robe; or the large and highly complicated double-layered outer robe; or perhaps even all three robes. It can be an anxious day and night for the monks scrambling to complete their tasks on time.

Even to this day, more than 2500 years later, devotees and monks enthusiastically celebrate Kathina holiday; some monasteries still follow all the particulars specified by the Buddha.

Sewing machines and colour dye can reduce the sweat of the operation. However, nowadays the lay donors usually give a ready-made robe, allowing

the Kathina celebration to proceed without the stress. This is acceptable, so long as the robe was correctly made (having at least four panels cut, not just sewn to appear cut). In some communities, the lay people get to take turns helping the monks to stitch the robes, and they line up for this privilege; or the laity may happily make a group effort to sew the Kathina robe in advance, themselves.

With or without the robe-sewing challenge, lay devotees still continue to turn out in large numbers very early in the morning on Kathina day, all dressed in white, making a procession into the monastery to parade around the Kathina cloth (whether a finished robe or white cloth) provided by some lucky family. Many believe that giving cloth on Kathina day brings special meritorious power to the donors, particularly donors of the Kathina cloth (or robe) used for the ceremonies. Kathina has turned into a great generosity-fest, with laity bringing to the monasteries not only an abundance of robes (or cloth) for resident monks, but all kinds of needed supplies and thoughtful gifts. In return, donors receive joy in giving to those worthy-of-gifts, knowing they have supported the continuation of Sangha and helped to continue the Dhamma. They deepen their faith, and will reap the merits of generosity to Sangha. The festive day is also an occasion to hear teachings and enjoy the company of good spiritual friends. Some donations are handed directly to all the monks, but most of the gifts end up for use in the temple for the benefit of the monks in residence; the monk who received the Kathina cloth has the duty and authority to manage these goods, storing them away or apportioning small items among monks as he or she sees fit. This monk gets to keep the Kathina robe indefinitely; if collectively sewn by one's fellows in the holy life, it will always seem special.

Kathina holiday takes place on any day within one month of the end of Vassa (that is, a month within the full moon that falls around the end of October or beginning of November). The Buddha made the date flexible. This allows monasteries to time the holiday for later, if they wish, to encourage monks to stay in residence a little longer; or multiple monasteries within traveling distance of each other may coordinate their Kathina dates, so that monks can cooperatively go to support each other's Kathina programs, for the happiness of each monastery's lay supporters.

Even as Vassa may not coincide with a rainy season in the West, monks in the West celebrating Kathina probably don't have threadbare robes needing replacement like the monks for whom the Buddha established this holiday. Yet Kathina, like Vassa, remains a vehicle for rich traditions initiated by the Buddha himself. With or without

heavy rains preceding it, Kathina also continues to hold great strength of meaning because it symbolizes and reinforces the mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship between the laity and the Sangha.

Source:-

<https://gooddhammablog.wordpress.com/2012/12/27/kathina/>

About the Writer:-

Ayya Sudhamma Bhikkhuni is abbess of Charlotte Buddhist Vihara. In 1999, Ayya Sudhamma became a sāmāṇerī or female Buddhist novice nun at the Bhavana Society under the tutelage of Henepola Gunaratana. In early 2003, she traveled to South Asia, where she became the first American-born woman to gain bhikkhuni ordination in the Theravada school in Sri Lanka. In 2007 she co-organized and hosted an "historic" meeting of nine bhikkhunis from various locations at her dwelling, the Carolina Buddhist Vihara, to recite the Pātimokkha. This marked the first gathering of Theravada bhikkhunis outside of Asia to recite the Patimokkha or to engage in any official act of Sangha (sanghakamma). Two days after the Patimokkha recitation, the group held a Kathina ceremony, another first achievement for Theravada bhikkhunis outside of Asia. It also was the largest gathering of Theravada bhikkhunis that had yet occurred in the USA, as they had not before gathered in groups larger than twos or threes.



Group effort - Lay devotees sewing the Kathina Cheevera.

WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

by Bhikkhu Pesala

The Buddha's daily routine was extraordinary, he slept for only a few hours in the early hours of the morning. We divide the night into three watches: from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., and from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. In the first watch, after bathing, the Buddha taught the community of monks. At the end of the first watch, the monks would return to their quarters. Then celestial beings approached the Buddha to ask questions. The Buddha spent the middle watch answering their questions.

During the first part of the last watch the Buddha practised walking meditation to relieve the stiffness caused by sitting since the morning. In the second part, the Buddha lay down mindfully and slept. In the third part, he enjoyed the bliss of nibbāna. After abiding in the absorption of great compassion in the fourth part, at dawn he considered who was ready to be taught the Dhamma.

The Weaver's Daughter

One morning he perceived in his divine eye the daughter of a poor weaver whose wife had just died. Realising that the young girl needed to hear his teaching, the Buddha went on foot to the village where she was staying. Seeing the Buddha arrive, the villagers invited him for the meal, and the Buddha gave a discourse after the meal to all the villagers, including the young girl. The essence of his teaching was as follows: "Death is certain, life is uncertain. Contemplate death constantly to overcome the fear of death. As one who enters the jungle armed with a stick is not afraid on seeing a snake, one who contemplates death constantly is not afraid if death comes suddenly." The villagers all appreciated the Buddha's discourse, and for several days meditated seriously on death. However, after a week or so every one of them had forgotten the Buddha's advice, and was carrying on just as heedlessly as before — except, that is, for the young girl. Because her mother had recently died, she could not forget the Buddha's words. She meditated constantly on death, for months and years afterwards.

Three years later the Buddha reconsidered the weaver's daughter situation and, seeing that she now had mature insight, he went to her village to teach her again. She was now sixteen, and had to work hard to help her father, who had no other children. On the day that the Buddha arrived, the weaver had been working all night to finish an urgent job, and his daughter was busy spinning more thread for her father. Hearing that the Buddha had arrived she considered what she should do. She decided to go to see the Buddha as soon as she had finished her spinning, then she would take the newly spun thread to her father.

The villagers offered the meal to the Buddha, but as the girl was not present, the Buddha sat in silence after the meal waiting for her to arrive. The villagers were obliged to wait in silence too, out of respect for the Buddha. Finally, the young girl arrived, and the Buddha asked her the following four questions:

"Young girl, where have you come from?"

"I do not know, Lord" she replied.

"Young girl, to where are you going?"

"I do not know, Lord" she replied.

"Do you not know?"

"I know, Lord" she replied.

"Do you know?"

"I do not know, Lord" she replied.

The villagers were baffled by her answers. Some thought she was being cheeky, and started scolding her, "Why don't you tell

the Buddha that you came from the spinning-shed, and are going to your father's house?"

The Buddha silenced them and asked the girl to explain her answers. The girl replied:

"When you asked, 'Where have you come from?' you didn't want to know that I came from the spinning-shed; you meant to ask from which existence I came to this one. So I replied that I do not know."



"When you asked, 'To where are you going?' you meant to ask to which existence I am going after this one, so I again replied that I do not know."

"When you asked, 'Do you not know?' you meant to ask, 'Do you not know that you will die?' so I replied that I know I will die."

"When you asked, 'Do you know?' you meant to ask, 'Do you know when you will die?' so I replied that I do not know when I will die."

The Buddha praised the girl for her intelligent answers, and the villagers were amazed. The Buddha then spoke the following verse:

"Blind is this world,
Only a few can see clearly.
Like birds that escape from a net,
Only a few go to a blissful state." (*Dhp* v 174)

The girl realised nibbāna and became a Stream-winner on hearing this verse.

The young girl then went to her father's house and put the newly spun skein of thread down by the loom. After working the whole night, her father had fallen asleep at the loom. When his daughter came in, he woke up with a start, and accidentally swung a heavy beam on the loom. The beam struck the girl hard, and she died on the spot. The father was totally distraught, and hurried to the Buddha to seek consolation. The Buddha explained the truth of suffering to him, and the weaver asked for ordination, later attaining -Arahantship.

The Buddha's love and compassion was unlimited. For the benefit of one poor girl and her father, he twice went on a long journey to teach the Dhamma, and he did not forget about the girl after the first visit, but returned as soon as he knew that she needed his help. Though he had many thousands of disciples including kings and ministers, and also taught celestial beings, the Buddha always had time for anyone who would benefit from his teaching, even including beggars and slaves.

This story is very interesting for the Buddhist because it shows that although we do believe in rebirth we do not need to remember our previous lives to gain nibbāna, the goal of Buddhism. The weaver's daughter could not tell the Buddha from which existence she had come to be reborn as a weaver's daughter, but the Buddha was pleased with her answers. She had understood about the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death after three years of meditation. That understanding enabled her to attain nibbāna while listening to the verse.

Who Am I?

One who has attained nibbāna no longer has any doubts such as "Am I?" "Am I not?" "What am I?" "How am I?" since the egocentric way of thinking has been removed by insight. It is not unlike the case of someone who has grown



up and lost interest in football. He is no longer disappointed when his football team loses, or elated when they win. Even if he hears that his former football team has been relegated to the second division, it no longer matters since he doesn't follow the team avidly any more.

Self-view is hard to remove entirely. We identify with our family, our school, our neighbourhood, our local football team, our country, or our racial group. If we hear any good or bad news about anything that we regard as ours then we feel elated or depressed. If we hear someone say something critical about us personally, then we may feel terrible. However, we should not take it too much to heart. There is a saying in the Dhammapada:—

“This, Atula, is an old saying; it is not one of today only:
They blame those who remain silent.
They blame those who speak too much,
They blame those who speak too little,
No one escapes blame in this world.” (*Dhp* v 227)

Similarly, if someone praises us we should not become conceited because of that. If we work hard we will get a good result, that is only natural, but there is always someone who can do better than us, at least in other ways. It is hard to remove pride and conceit, but we must do it if we want to gain the highest happiness. The Buddha described how his pride and intoxication vanished, when he was still an un-enlightened Bodhisatta. “On seeing an old man, all pride and intoxication in youth vanished. On seeing a sick man, all pride and intoxication in health vanished. On seeing a dead man, all pride and intoxication in life vanished.”

How Can We Remove Egoism?

How can we remove self-view, pride, and conceit? We must develop mindfulness or awareness. Whatever thoughts or feelings arise within us should be observed as they occur from moment to moment. We should not allow ourselves to be heedless even for an instant. Heedlessness allows defilements like self-view, pride, and conceit to enter the mind and dominate it.

Perhaps you have enjoyed watching a cartoon like Tom and Jerry. How did the ideas “Tom” and “Jerry” arise? When one watches a cartoon, one become absorbed in the story and soon begins to believe and feel what one imagines Tom and Jerry are feeling. Actually, Tom and Jerry exist only in our imaginations. A cartoon is only drawings that are displayed on the screen in rapid succession. However, the mind arises and passes away much more rapidly than the cartoon pictures, so it can put together the dialogue, sound effects, and pictures to create the illusion that Tom really is bashing Jerry over the head with a frying-pan, so we are emotionally affected by what we see.

Real life is like this too. We see and hear things so rapidly that our mind constructs a mental picture, which we regard as real. If someone abuses us, we may feel like they are bashing us over the head, they are making bad kamma, but we suffer. Why is this? It is due to the mental formations that we create. We cannot easily stop this natural process because it is the result of previous kamma. Having abused others in the past, we have to suffer abuse in the present. However, we can sharpen our awareness of the process to the point where we can separate the mental impressions from the experience of hearing. Eventually, we will realise that all these impressions do not happen to anyone, they just happen. Then we will realise that the idea of a self, a person, a ‘me’, or a ‘you’, is just an illusion.

Self-view is deeply rooted and cannot be removed by the unmindful person. The average, unmindful person dwells with self-view dominating his or her



mind for the entire life. The mindful meditator can disrupt it temporarily while engaged in meditation, but after stopping meditation it will gradually reassert itself unless the meditator has gained deep insight. If a meditator gains deep insight and attains the first path of a Stream-winner, self-view is completely destroyed, and will never arise again. Such a person may be heedless to some extent, but can never be careless enough to break any of the five precepts. He or she is absolutely free from rebirth in the four lower realms of hell, hungry ghosts, demons, and animals, and will attain final nibbāna (*Arahantship*) within seven lives at the most. Having seen nibbāna personally, he or she has unshakeable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, and is truly worthy of offerings and homage. The weaver's daughter was a Stream-winner.

After attaining nibbāna, the Dhamma becomes central to the life of a Stream-winner. They are not yet free from sensual desire and anger, so they can lead a fairly normal family life. Whenever they wish to enjoy the peace of nibbāna they can meditate again, developing concentration, and attaining the fruition of the first path. If their concentration is strong, they may remain in the attainment of fruition for quite long periods, say, an hour or two. If they wish to attain the higher path, they should go into retreat for meditation and resolve not to attain the fruition of the first path during that period, and strive to attain the higher path. If they are successful and attain the second path of a Once-returned, they will be reborn on this earth only once more at the most before attaining the final liberation of Arahantship.



The second path destroys strong forms of lust and anger, but some of these deep-rooted defilements remain, so they still have some sensual attachment and ill-will. If the Once-returned strives again in meditation and attains the third path of a Non-returned, all traces of lust and anger are uprooted. Since they have no sensual attachment at all, they will not be born in the womb again, and will take rebirth only in the Suddhāvāsa Brahmā realms. These realms are the Theravāda ‘Pure Land’ because only Non-returned are reborn there. The Bodhisattas are not reborn there either, because they are still worldlings who have not yet gained even the first path of a Stream-winner.

Non-returned seem to be extremely rare these days. Saya Thetgyi, a Burmese lay meditation teacher, who taught U Ba Khin (*Goenkaji's teacher*), was reputed to be a Non-returned. The Venerable Ledi Sayādaw praised him and asked him to teach meditation to his own monk disciples. A Non-returned will be naturally inclined to lead a monastic life, having no sexual desire at all, but may be obliged to remain as a lay person to support relatives. The potter honoured by Buddha Kassapa in the Ghaṭikāra Sutta (*Majjhimanikāya, Sutta 81*) was a Non-returned. Though he was a humble potter, he was the chief supporter of Buddha Kassapa, and looked after his own blind and aged parents. He did not use money, but let people take his pots, leaving whatever goods they wished to in exchange. Knowing that he was a good supporter of the Buddha, they donated generously so he didn't need any other source of income. Refusing to dig the earth himself, he gathered clay from river banks or that had been dug up by animals. Thus, though a layman, he lived on ten precepts like one gone forth.

The Non-returned has to strive again in meditation to attain the final goal of Arahantship. Only then is all rebirth and suffering finally destroyed. Not even the subtlest defilements remain, so the Arahant is worthy of the highest honour. The word ‘Arahant’ means ‘worthy.’ There have been a few monks in Burma and Thailand in recent years who are reputed to have attained the final path. Venerable Ledi Sayādaw was thought to be one, but it is hard to be sure, since Arahants are extremely modest about their attainments.

A certain monk was living in dependence on an elder who was an Arahant. Living in dependence meant in those days that the pupil shared a cell with his teacher, looked after his robes, studied at his feet, and accompanied him on the daily alms round. Teacher and pupil lived liked a good father and devoted son. One day, while walking for alms, the pupil asked his teacher, “Venerable Sir, how can one know an Arahant?” The elder, who was an Arahant, replied, “It is not easy, friend, to know an Arahant. Even if one were to live in dependence on an Arahant, doing all the duties for him, and accompany him on his daily almsround, one might not know that he was an Arahant.” Yet even when given such a broad hint by his teacher, the pupil did not realise that the elder was an Arahant.



Due to excessive devotion, pious people are inclined to elevate their revered teacher to the status of an Arahant, though he may still be a worldlyling or a Stream-winner at best. To eradicate all lust, anger, conceit, and attachment to life is no easy task. First one should aim to attain the stage of Stream-winning in this very life. If one succeeds in doing that, one may perhaps then be able to distinguish between a worldly person and a saint, since one will be free from doubt and superstition.

Who Can Attain Nibbāna?

It is my belief that most intelligent people could attain Stream-winning in this very life if they really tried hard. However, very few really strive hard in meditation. Since confidence and effort are lacking, the goal cannot be attained. Though she was only thirteen years old, the weaver’s daughter practised meditation relentlessly for three years to attain the path. These days, people think that a ten-day intensive vipassanā course is really a bit over the top, but striving in meditation throughout the whole day and late into the night is not self-mortification. It is the minimum amount of effort required to attain deep insight or nibbāna. If we want to sleep at least six or seven hours, the goal is still far away.



To motivate oneself, one should meditate seriously on death. There is no guarantee that one will not die today. Perhaps one can avoid paying taxes if one lives like a monk, but no one can avoid death. Each breath brings death nearer. Please think seriously about this — do not imagine for one minute that it will never happen to you. If you postpone meditation until you are old — assuming that you live to old age — your attachment will have grown stronger, and your health and vitality will have grown weaker. It is best to meditate in the prime of youth, before the clutter of household life traps one in its vice-like grip.

In Burmese, the expression for getting married means, literally, “to fall into house prison.” The Burmese have the right attitude. Married life is a comfortable prison from which it is hard to escape. Even if one partner freely permits the other to go to meditate for a few weeks, or to ordain permanently, most will not want to go.

When the Bodhisatta heard that his son had been born he murmured “A fetter has arisen” so his father Suddhodana named his new grandson ‘Rāhula’ meaning fetter, hoping that the baby would prove an impediment to the Bodhisatta’s renunciation of household life. Fortunately for us, the Bodhisatta’s mind was already made up, and the news of Rāhula’s birth was the final spur

to make him decide, “It must be done at once, before I get attached.” So he left the palace on the same night without even setting eyes on his newborn son.

Attachment is very sticky stuff. Many monks who fall back to household life do so because of sexual desire. To get free from sensual attachment, one must meditate either on death or on the repulsive aspects of the body. One should consider what all human bodies contain. If we opened one up and took a look inside, it would be hard to become lustful. It is just a foul smelling carcase of meat, blood, and bones that we have to carry around the whole day and night. If there was no skin or clothes to cover it up, what a horrible sight it would be. One would need to carry a stick to drive off the dogs and crows that would come sniffing around looking for something to eat. Yet people think very highly of their own bodies, and those of others. What folly it is to lust after another person’s body, but delusion fools us completely when we are heedless.

At one time a certain nun fell in love with the Venerable Ānanda and, pretending to be ill, she arranged for him to visit her in her quarters. Venerable Ānanda was then still only a Stream-winner, so he was not yet free from lust, but he was wise enough not to allow desire to arise. He did not get angry with her either, but admonished her, “Sister, sexual intercourse is the cause of birth. From birth, old age, disease, and death arise.” Realising that Venerable Ānanda knew about her ulterior motives, she confessed her offence to him, and regained her sense of shame.

To gain liberation from suffering, there has to be renunciation at some point. Desire and attachment will not just disappear of their own accord. We have to pluck them out as we remove a splinter or thorn stuck under the skin. It is painful, but when it is done we can dwell at ease again. The most effective way to remove desire is to practise mindfulness meditation relentlessly throughout the whole day without a break until insight knowledge arises. On seeing things as they really are, desire and attachment will vanish.

To Where Are You Going?

Most of us will not attain final liberation in this very life and become an Arahant — we have to be realistic. Therefore, it is pertinent to ask, “To where are we going after death?” We do not know, and there is no point in idle speculation. However, the Buddha



advised all of his followers, both lay and monastic disciples, to contemplate constantly on five things. This discourse is called: “The Certainties to Constantly Recollect” (*Abhiñha-paccavekkhitabba-ñhāna Suttaṃ*).

“These five certainties, monks, should be constantly recollected upon by a man or a woman, by a householder or by one gone forth. What five? I am subject to aging, I have not gone beyond aging. I am subject to disease, I have not gone beyond disease. I am subject to death, I have not gone beyond death. All that is mine, beloved and pleasing to me, will perish and be destroyed. I am the owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, I have my kamma as my seed or womb, I am related to my kamma, and have kamma as my true refuge. Whatever kamma I shall do, whether good or evil, I will inherit its results (*vipāka*). These five certainties, monks, should be reflected upon constantly by a man or a woman, by a householder or by one gone forth.”

Such teachings are unpopular these days. People are intoxicated by sensual pleasures and do not like to reflect at all on aging, disease, death, and impermanence. Many do not believe in kamma and rebirth.

However, the Buddha gave clear instructions that his followers should reflect on these things, not just occasionally, for example when attending a funeral or embarking on a hazardous journey, nor even daily before lying down to sleep, but constantly (*abhiñham*).

Living beings are heedless. While intoxicated by thoughts and perceptions of sensual pleasures they are liable to do misdeeds by body, speech, or thought, which will result in suffering in the future, either in this very life, in the next life, or in future existences.

This story of the Weaver's Daughter clearly shows that the majority of the villagers who heard the Buddha's initial instructions to contemplate on death did not pay heed. Only the weaver's daughter was heedful because her mother had recently passed away. Therefore she was strongly motivated and full of zeal (*samvega*). Arousing a sense of urgency is vital, otherwise no one will be inclined to strive hard this very day.

Source:-

<http://www.aimwell.org/pesala.html>

About the Writer:-

Bhikkhu Pesala first practiced intensive meditation at a retreat in 1975, and ever since has dedicated his life to Dhamma practice. After his ordination in 1979 under Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, he adopted the Sayādaw's method of watching the abdominal movements, and slow, mindful walking. He teaches meditation wherever and whenever he is invited. He set up the Association for Insight Meditation in 1995 to support those who want to practice insight meditation seriously.

TEACHING AND PRACTICE

FINDING SENSE IN SENSATION

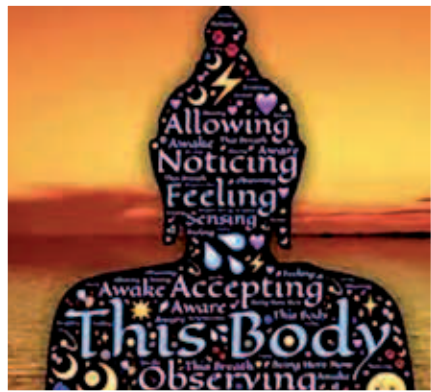
by S. N. Goenka

S. N. Goenka speaks about the crucial role of the body in vipassana practice.

Buddha was the foremost scientist of mind and matter (*nama and rupa*). What makes him a peerless scientist is his discovery that *tanha*, or craving, and by extension, aversion—arises from *vedana*, or sensation on the body.

Before the time of the Buddha, little if any importance was given to bodily sensation. In fact, it was the centrality of bodily sensation that was the Buddha's great discovery in his quest to determine the root cause of suffering and the means to its cessation. Before the Buddha, India's spiritual masters emphasized teachings that encouraged people to turn away from sensory objects and ignore the sensations that contact with them engenders.

But the Buddha, a real scientist, examined sensation more closely. He discovered that when we come into contact with a sense-object through one of the six sense doors (ears, eyes, nose, tongue, body, mind), we cling to the sensation it creates, giving rise to *tanha* (wanting it to stay and to increase) and aversion (wanting it to cease). The mind then reacts with thoughts of either "I want" or "I do not want." Buddha discovered that everything that arises in the mind arises with the sensations on the body and that these sensations are the material we have to work with.



The first step, then, is to train the mind to become so sharp and sensitive that it will learn to detect even the subtlest sensations. That job is done by *anapana*—the practice of awareness of the breath—on the small area under the nostrils, above the upper lip. If we concentrate on this area, the mind becomes sharper and sharper, subtler and subtler. This is the way we begin to become aware of every sort of sensation on the body.

Next, we feel the sensations but don't react to them. We can learn to maintain this equanimity towards sensations by understanding their transitory nature.

Whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, gross or subtle, every sensation shares the same characteristic: it arises and passes away, arises and passes away. It is this arising and passing that we have to experience through practice, not just accept as truth because Buddha said so, not just accept because intellectually it seems logical enough to us. We must experience sensation's nature, understand its flux, and learn not to react to it.

As we reach deeper states of awareness, we will be able to detect subtler and subtler sensations, or vibrations of greater rapidity, arising and passing with greater speed. In these deep states, our mind will become so calm, so tranquil, so pure, that we will immediately recognize any impurity accompanying the agitated state and make the choice to refrain from reacting adversely. It becomes clear to us that we can't harm anybody without first defiling ourselves with emotions like hate or anger or lust. If we do this, we will come to an experiential understanding of the deep truth of *anicca*, or impermanence. As we observe sensations without reacting to them, the impurities in our minds lose their strength and cannot overpower us.



The Buddha was not merely giving sermons; he was offering a technique to help people reach a state in which they could feel the harm they do to themselves. Once we see this, *sila*, or ethics, follows naturally. Just as we pull our hand from a flame, we step back from harming ourselves and others.

It is a wonderful discovery that by observing physical sensations on the body, we can eradicate the roots of the defilements of mind. As we practice more, negative emotions will become far more conspicuous to us much earlier; as soon as they arise, we will become aware of sensations and have the opportunity to make ethical choices. But first we need to begin with what is present to us deeply in our minds at the level of sensation. Otherwise, we will keep ourselves and others miserable for a very long time.

Source:-

<https://tricycle.org/magazine/finding-sense-sensation/>

About the Writer:-

Satya Narayan Goenka commonly known as S.N. Goenka (1924-2013) was born to a rich Indian family and raised in Myanmar. He moved to India in 1969 and started teaching meditation. He was a leading figure of the vipassana movement, taught meditation for 44 years, and established non-commercial vipassana centers worldwide. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 2012, an award given for distinguished service of high order.

VISAKHA: The Chief Female Lay Disciple of the Buddha

by Asoka Bandarage

The Buddha once remarked, “Visakha stands out foremost among the women lay supporters... of the Order.”(1)

The generosity (dana) of royal and wealthy patrons such as Visakha and Anathapindika, the Buddha’s chief male lay disciple, contributed greatly to the preservation and spread of the Buddha’s teachings (Dhamma) over the centuries. In light of contemporary debates over such concerns as the ethics of wealth and the roles of women, it is inspiring to reflect upon the life of Visakha, the great Dhamma practitioner who was the Buddha’s chief benefactress.

Visakha was born into a wealthy family in the Maghada Kingdom and grew up in Saketa, a lovely city built by her father near Savatthi, located in the Kosala Kingdom. In Savatthi, she married into a family of great wealth. In addition to her riches, Visakha was renowned for her beauty, charm, poise, and physical strength. She possessed the five maidenly attributes of beauty – exquisite hair, teeth, skin, youth, and form – that her husband Punnavaddhana had required of his bride. After marriage, Visakha gave birth to ten sons and ten daughters, who in turn gave birth to a great many grandchildren and great grandchildren.



Visakha making offerings to Gautama Buddha.

Visakha was an exemplary wife and mother, and a compassionate caretaker of animals. She was also a person of wisdom, kindness, generosity, and other attributes of inner beauty. Though she lived in a patriarchal society, Visakha maintained her own independent business and was known for her managerial and communication skills. Among all of Visakha’s virtues, most noteworthy was her devotion and support for the Buddha and the sangha – the monastic community of monks (bhikkhus) and nuns (bhikkhunis).

Visakha first met the Buddha, listened to his teachings, and entered the path of the Dhamma when she was just seven years old. From then on, until her death at the age of 120, she used her wealth and talents to tirelessly and generously serve the sangha. Visakha’s father-in-law Migara was a devout disciple of the Niganthas, a sect of naked ascetics. The story of how she convinced him to accept the Buddha’s teachings attests to her sense of humor, intelligence, and audacity.

One day, a Buddhist monk came to Migara’s doorstep as he was eating out of a golden bowl and Migara refused to offer him any food. Embarrassed, Visakha said to the monk, “Pass by, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law eats stale food.” The enraged Migara demanded an explanation. In her calm voice, Visakha explained that Migara was eating the benefits of his past good deeds without doing anything to accrue further merit. Visakha also said that, given her unshakeable faith in the teachings of the Buddha, she did not feel comfortable living in a house where monks were not welcome. If she did not get permission to invite the monks to the house, she would leave.

Reluctantly, Migara agreed to invite the Buddha and the monks to a meal at his house. When he heard the Buddha’s discourse at the end of the meal, Migara entered the Dhamma path. He expressed gratitude to his daughter-in-law for helping birth his spiritual liberation and declared that henceforth

Visakha would be like a mother to him. Thus, Visakha came to be known as Mother Visakha or Migara-mata, the mother of Migara. In time, she built the magnificent Pubbarama (Eastern Monastery) and donated it to the sangha. The monastery came to be known as Migara-matu-pasada, the terraced abode of Migara’s mother.

Visakha always tended vigilantly to the well-being of the sangha, attending to the needs of both monks and nuns. She requested the Buddha to grant her eight boons. As long as she lived, she wished to give robes to monks during the rainy season, rice gruel to the monks daily, meals to monks who entered Savatthi, meals to monks who left the city, meals to sick monks, medicine for sick monks, meals for monks tending the sick, and clothes for nuns to wear while bathing. When Visakha disclosed her pure intention, the Buddha granted her these eight boons. Her request was not motivated by self-promotion. Instead, she wished to develop the five spiritual faculties (pancha indriya) – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom – and the seven factors of enlightenment (sapta bhojanga) – mindfulness, keen investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

As the leading female lay disciple of the Buddha, Visakha played an influential role in activities pertaining to the sangha. A number of monastic precepts were promulgated due to her intervention. For example, she questioned those monks who refused to ordain novices during the rainy season. She told the Buddha, “The Dhamma is timeless. There is no time when the Dhamma cannot be followed.” Thereafter, the Buddha allowed ordination during the rainy season. Visakha played an especially important role in managing the bhikkhunī sangha. Sometimes the Buddha allowed her to settle disputes among the nuns. Some precepts for the nuns were set forth on her advice.



Visakha and her father in law Migara.

The story of how Pubbarama came to be built is fascinating. One day, while Visakha was listening to a Dhamma discourse at Jetavana Monastery, built by Anathapindika in Savatthi, she set aside a valuable jewelled cloak that was part of her bridal jewellery and forgot it there. When she discovered the loss, she refused to take it back and instead auctioned it off to raise money to support the sangha. When she could not find anyone in the whole of Savatthi with the means to buy her expensive cloak, worth some 90 million pieces of gold, Visakha bought it back herself. With that money and an additional 180 million, she bought land and built Pubbarama at the eastern gate of Savatthi. The building had two floors, with 500 rooms on each floor, and a pinnacle of solid gold at the top that could hold 60 water pots. It is said that the building was very tastefully furnished and completely carpeted. Pubbarama was donated to the sangha in the thirty-first year after the Buddha’s awakening.

On the day that Visakha dedicated Pubbarama to the sangha, she circumambulated the monastery with her children and grandchildren, singing elatedly. Seeing this unusual behaviour, some monks asked the Buddha whether Visakha had lost her mind. The Buddha responded that Visakha had not lost her mind; she was simply reciting some verses of exultation over the fulfillment of her aspirations in past and present existences. The Buddha then spoke a verse extolling the merits of putting one’s resources and abilities to good use. This well-known verse is known as “Visakha Vatthu”:

Just as from a collection of flowers many garlands can be made by an expert florist, so also, with wealth, faith, and generosity, one who is subject to birth and death can do much good.(2)

Pubbarama is mentioned frequently in the Buddhist texts. The Buddha spent many rainy seasons there during the last 25 years of his life and delivered many important discourses there. In the Agganna Sutta, which was delivered to two brahmins, the Buddha refuted caste ideology. He explained how human beings became bound to the wheel of samsāra life after life and how the practice of Dhamma, which is universal, allows aspirants from any of the four castes to attain enlightenment. It was also at Pabbata (Pabbata) that the Buddha gave permission for the patimokkha, the basic code of conduct for the sangha, to be recited in his absence.



Visakha supervising construction of Pabbata.

One full-moon night, while the Buddha was residing at Pabbata and the white kaumudi lily was in bloom, the Buddha delivered the Anapanasati Sutta to a vast community of silent monks. In this discourse, which is central to the Buddha's teaching of meditation, he explained mindfulness of breathing in detail:

O bhikkhus, the full awareness of breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will be rewarding and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the Four Establishments of Winter. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practiced continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.(3)

Over time, due to a confluence of factors, Buddhist teachings and culture nearly disappeared from India. These factors included internal dissension,

loss of patronage from the royalty and wealthy donors such as Visakha and Anathapindika, the revival of Brahmanism, and invasions. Like most other Buddhist monasteries and sacred sites, Pabbata was destroyed. Thanks to the pillars built by Emperor Asoka in 3 BCE, important Buddhist sites throughout the Indian subcontinent can still be identified. The ruins of Pabbata and the stupa that houses Mother Visakha's ashes are yet to be excavated. Ironically, today the only thing that marks Pabbata, the site where the Buddha spoke out against caste ideology and taught mindfulness of breathing, is a broken Asokan pillar in the shape of a Shivalingam, worshiped by Hindu villagers.



What is left of Pabbata Monastery today.

Appreciation and respect for Visakha's contributions to human spiritual advancement called for the excavation and restoration of Pabbata by the Indian authorities, with the support of the international Buddhist community

NOTES

1. Anguttara Nikāya 1, chap. 14.
2. Dhammapada, verse 53.
3. Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 118.

Source:-

<http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/2018%20Sakyadhita%20Newsletter.pdf>

About the Writer:-

Asoka Bandarage is a Sri Lankan academic specializing in international development, political economy, women and gender studies, multiculturalism, conflict analysis and resolution, peace and security, South Asia, Sri Lanka, population and ecology. She has headed the Women's Studies Program at Mount Holyoke College and also taught at institutions including Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute in Washington, DC.

FEATURE

WOMEN IN MONGOLIAN BUDDHIST CULTURE

by Altantsetseg Jadamba (translated by Otgoo Tseveldorj)

I live with my two children, a son and a daughter, in Tarialan District of Khuvsgul Province in northwestern Mongolia. I was born in nearby Zavkhan Province in 1976 as the oldest child in a family of six. After high school, I studied to be a chef at a college in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. I managed the canteen at the college for a while, then worked as an assistant chef in a Russian restaurant called Bistro. I enjoy cooking a lot, especially international dishes, and my cooking also brought happiness to others.

In 2010, I had the great opportunity to join Sakyadhita International Association on Buddhist Women as a representative of Mongolian Buddhist women. The next year, I met Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Christie Chang when they visited Mongolia and was fortunate to take part in the Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women that was held in Ulaanbaatar. The year 2013 was a fantastic time for me. Doing voluntary charity work made me feel intensely alive and active. Since joining Sakyadhita, I have

learned more about Buddhist women in Mongolia and became inspired to do whatever I could for the Buddha and Buddhist women in my country. Currently, I am one of the leaders of the Women's Union in Tarialan, Khuvsgul.



Mongolian Buddhist Women.

Buddhism in Mongolia is culturally unique. Sadly, however, there are only a few Buddhist centres for women there. While many Buddhist centres for male practitioners have been in existence for centuries, those for women have been few in comparison. As a result, Buddhism is very unbalanced in terms of gender equality in Mongolia.

Nevertheless, developing Buddhist women's potential in this country should be easy since Buddhism is the dominant religion of Mongolia and about 80 percent of the population identifies as Buddhists. Unfortunately, many

other religions have been streaming into Mongolia in recent years, particularly Christianity. All these religions have their own buildings for organizing activities and, with the help of international investment, have the means to introduce many special services. With so many resources, these religions make a big impression in the minds of the people. My objective is to help Mongolian Buddhists have greater access to their own Buddhist religious heritage. I am strongly committed to working for Buddhism on the local level.



Mongolian Nuns.

My aim is to promote awareness of Buddhism in the countryside. My central tasks include publicizing and implementing Buddhist activities for local nomadic people and their children living there, especially the herders who live in remote rural areas, far from urban centres. The most successful method of promoting Buddhism locally has been through religious arts festivals. Publicizing Buddhism in this way incorporates performances and other aspects of Buddhist art and culture that nomadic people find very interesting and beneficial. In cooperation with lamas from the local monastery, we have been organizing local religious arts festivals two to three times every each year since 2013. During the festivals, we offer concerts and other performances, religious events, and awards. We give little presents to the elderly and the children. I also do my best to provide free training programs, including distributing books provided through Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women and organizing English training with volunteers provided through Jamyang Foundation. Every day, many local people visit my home requesting assistance.

Often, I think about how to go forward with this work. What is the best way to handle the difficulties since Buddhist schools for women in Mongolia do not exist, not even for nuns? Information about Buddhism is very scarce, but somehow the women who are devoted to the Buddha have not lost their faith.

From the start, when I began organizing these events, I was immediately faced with the problems of finding money and space for them. We should, theoretically, have a Buddhist centre that includes a proper prayer hall and library in it, but in reality information about the practice of Buddhism and facilities such as these were lacking in Mongolia. As a result, I serve the local people in my home. My goal is to create a Buddhist tour that includes all the provinces of Mongolia to publicize and promote the Dharma, and also to provide Buddhist education to the herders' children.



Mongolian Family.

I am delighted to be a member of Sakyadhita. Having loving Buddhist sisters around the world is quite encouraging to me. In my hands I hold very important religious treasures that I have inherited from my ancestors. Over the course of my life, I have recognized the great responsibility I have to share these treasures, passed down from generations of ancestors. I am dedicated to passing them on, to ensure their existence for generations to come.

Source:-

<http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/2018%20Sakyadhita%20Newsletter.pdf>

BMV NEWS AND EVENTS

1. Upcoming Events in October - December 2019

a) Kathina Day – 20th October 2019 @ 7.30am

A special day for devotees to offer basic requisites to the Maha Sangha and the temple. Devotees will circumambulate the Shrine Hall 3 times and then make their offerings together with the *Kathina cheevera* (robe) to the Maha Sangha. The requisites offered include robes, medicines, toiletries, cleaning equipment and kitchen items. All are welcome to participate in this meritorious deed.



b) Annual Buddhist Novitiate Programme – 6th Dec to 15th Dec 2019

The Annual Novitiate Programme has been held since 1976 to give opportunity for devotees to experience the life dedicated to the cause of studying, practising, realising and spreading the Dhamma as a novice monk. Limited to 25 participants only, registration is now open to all who are 18 years and above. The forms are available at the BMV office. The programme coordinator is Ven. Professor R. Padmasiri Thera.



c) Sanghamitta Full Moon Day – 10th December

This full moon commemorates the arrival of the Buddhist nun Sanghamitta from India bringing with her a sapling of the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment. Ven Sanghamitta is also credited with the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Order to Sri Lanka from where it was brought to and established in other countries. A full



day Observance of 8 Precepts Programme will be organised from 7am to 7pm to commemorate the glorious buddhist nuns and women of the past and present. This programme will be conducted by Venerable Bhikkhuni Dhammadina, a senior bhikkhuni from the Ayya Khema Meditation Centre of Sri Lanka. She is the disciple of Venerable Dr Bhikkhuni Kusuma who used to conduct the Sanghamitta programme for several years at BMV a decade back. All are encouraged to participate especially women folk. The full moon Buddha Puja will be held at 7.30pm followed by chanting and blessings by the Maha Sangha and a dhamma sermon on the significance of Sanghamitta Day.

2. Past Events in August and September 2019

A) Dhamma Sharing

- i) **Bro Benny Liow**
– Sunday, 23rd August
Topic – **Why Buddhism is True**



- ii) **Bro Vong Choon Choy**
– Sunday, 25th August
Topic – **Lokavipatti Sutta**
(*Eight Worldly Conditions*)



- iii) **Venerable Seelaratana**
– Friday, 6th September
Topic – **Kamma is Unfair**

– Sunday, 8th September
Topic – **Value of Parents**



C) All Night Chanting – 30th August

The 55th All Night Chanting was held on the 30th of August at 7.30pm. Venerable Chief Datuk K Sri Dhammaratana and Venerable Chief B. Sri Saranankara led the monks from the Theravada tradition representing the Buddhist Maha Vihara, Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple, Sentul and a small group of monks who specially came down from Sri Lanka, chanted the Maha Pirith from 8.00pm to 6.30am, the next day. Bro Sarath W. Surendre carried the revered Buddha relic and Bro Quah Chee Boon carried the revered Book of Suttas.



B) Inter Religious Forum (K Sri Dhammananda Peace Conversations) – 24th August

An Inter-Religious Forum titled 'Many Rivers, One Ocean, Many Masters' was organised by the Buddhist Maha Vihara on 24th August from 9.30am to 12.30pm. The panel of speakers were Cor Episcopa Father Philip Thomas (Christian faith rep); Ms Gowri P. S. Thangaya (Hindu faith rep); Prof Dr Syed Farid Alatas (Muslim faith rep); Mr Vijaya Samarawickrama (Buddhist faith rep), Sadar Suhdave Dasmesh Singh (Sikh) and Ms Ranee Sreedharan (Bahai faith rep) The Moderator was Dr Amir Farid Che Ishak. Vegetarian lunch was served after the event.



Panel of Speakers.



Audience.

D) Visit by Dharma Drum Society, Taiwan – 29th August

Nineteen members (including 2 nuns) of the Dharma Drum Society paid a courtesy call at the Buddhist Maha Vihara on 29th August. Bro Lau Kai Kong and 8 of his adult class students hosted the group. The programme which included a meeting with Venerable Chief Dhammaratana, a tour of the Vihara premises and dhamma sharing, ended with packed lunch for everyone. Translators were on hand as the Dharma Drum Society spoke in Mandarin.



E) Maha Sanghika Dana – 31st August

Maha Sanghika Dana was held to commemorate the 13th death anniversary of the late Most Venerable Dr K Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thera and to remember with gratitude all other departed Venerable Sangha members and spiritual teachers for their service and compassion in sharing the Dhamma.



F) Examination Blessing Service – 31st August

Puja was conducted to invoke the Blessings of all the Devas and the Noble Triple Gem for the students who were sitting for major public examinations in 2019. The Maha Sangha was led by Venerable Chief Datuk K Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera and Venerable K Siridhamma Thera, Principal of BISDS.



BUDDHIST INSTITUTE SUNDAY DHAMMA SCHOOL (BISDS)

BISDS – Students trip 2019 – Sunday 28th July, 2019

Hurray. Happy and joyful. Clap! clap! clap! Sunday 28th July, 2019 was BISDS student's outing day. This year we visited a Tin Mining Museum and Gua Tempurung Cave in Kampar, Perak. Children of all ages including the youth participated in this trip. Teachers and staff were there as coordinators and providing support to care for the children especially the younger kids. The school chartered 2 coaches with 44 seaters each but due to overwhelming response, a few staff resorted to ride in Brother Ronald's car.

At 7.15 am, attendance was taken. Short briefing and strict instructions were imposed by the organizer for safety reasons. Once everyone fully understood on the itinerary, we adjourned to the shrine hall for the blessings led by our school principal, Venerable K Siridhamma Thera.

I was in bus A seated with the younger children group. Uncle Kent was the driver for the day. After 2 hours ride and 15 minutes toilet break along the journey, we arrived at the first destination to the tin mining museum. Several local tour leaders led our children into the museum. To the older children, it was a refreshing and educational tour for them. For the younger kids, they listened attentively trying to absorb and understand what was said. The children had hands-on experience to swirl a small frying pan as "dulang-washer" to segregate the soil and the tin ore. After group photos were taken, we adjourned for lunch in a local air-conditioned restaurant nearby.

Next come the highlight of this trip in Gua Tempurung Cave. Literally translated as coconut shell cave which is about 500 meters in height and 3km long, making it the longest cave in Malaysia. Certain parts of the cave have electrical lightings and we could see and imagine the stalactites and stalagmites on the walls of the caves as silhouette of animals. One of the bigger chambers known as golden flowstone

cavern is about 90 meters in height. Walkways of steps and staircase were developed for cave enthusiast with easy passage venture into the interior. This cave has an underground river. It is about 1.6 km long with crystal clear water.

For safety reasons, those children aged 9 and below were encouraged to take the dry walk accompanied by teachers and staffs. The teens, youth, teachers and staff, joined the adventure tour with 2 local tour guides. A brief history about the cave plus the dos and don'ts we briefed by the Cave management team fell to my deaf ears.

The adventure begins. We walked in a line lead by the local tour guide. The cave was completely silent and in darkness in the hope to see the bats out from their hiding.

We then continue climbing the steps to the next level. Climbing along was Bro Khoo from Tissa class, reminded the children to be mindful and careful at all times. As we moved further in, it was dimmer but cooler. Finally, we reached the top. We saw one of the formations from the deposits over the years or decades. Looking down, there were steps deep down low and it disappeared in the darkness. We were told that this is the last chamber with electric lightings.

After few hundred meters of crawling and creeping on the pebbled flooring, at last we reached the exit. This is one of the few exits from this cave. Changing rooms were provided for us to wash up and changed to dry clothing. Light refreshments of fruits and local delicacies were served before we left for KL at about 5pm.

We arrived at BMV about 9 pm. Sadhu to the organizing team, the youth team and the supporting parents for the success of this trip. I will now look forward to year 2020 children trip.

From Sis Jun Lim Tuan Fung



Portraits of 93 Eminent Disciples of the Buddha



Buddha and his Disciples

No 34. Sobhita Maha Thera

– He delved into the past

This Maha Arahant was able to recall his past lives in order of succession for a period of 500 *kalpas*. In the Dispensation of Gautama Buddha, he was born at Sravasti in a Brahmin family. He listened to a sermon of the Buddha. He sought ordination and was ordained. He proceeded to Bandumathi where he sang the praises of the Buddha by a set of verses. Before long he became an Arahant.



Sobhita Maha Thera.

Of his immense past, he could thus go as far as *kalpas* of time, up to the time when he was born in the Rupa world, that is where body is born by means of Jhana power. He is said to be an exponent of *Abhidhamma*.

The Buddha, addressing the Bhikkhus, and the laity declared that the Elder Sobhita was foremost in the Noble Order for recalling the past lives in order of succession for a longer period than any other. He was also a seer with prophetic vision. He, too, obtained the assurance from Padumuttara Buddha.

*To thou revealed the past,
The unexplored regions vast,
The prophetic mantle you wear
The verities you laid bare.*

“

The theme is to pay tribute to the 80 Maha Arahants and the 13 Maha Theri Arahants who had by their efforts won emancipation of a rare distinction. They belonged to the innermost circles in the life of the Gautama Buddha. The Buddha and the Maha Arahants were together at all times. Their lives portray heroic endeavor. - Editor

”

No 35. Upali Maha Thera

– He was unrivalled in the knowledge of the Discipline

Upali was a barber by profession. He was the royal barber. He accompanied the six royal Sakyan Princes to seek ordination from the Buddha. They were Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Kimbala, Bhagu, Devadatta and Ananda. Each distinguished himself except for Devadatta who fell by the wayside. By common consent among the six Princes, Upali was ordained first so that according to precedence, the Princes had to pay respect to him thus showing that they were able to be humble. Thus caste distinctions were spurned by the Noble Ones. The Buddha concurred.



Upali Maha Thera.

It is said that in a former birth, Upali insulted a Pacceka Buddha but though forgiven, he could not escape altogether the evil effects of his Karma, hence his birth in a barber's family. He was seeking to be a forest dweller. But the Buddha dissuaded him from doing so. If he were to be with the Buddha, he would have learning to his credit. He listened to the Blessed One, who taught him the whole of the *Vinaya Pitaka* and he was doubly rewarded. Upali became in no long time an authority on Discipline or *Vinaya*. There are five books on the *Vinaya*. They are 1-*Mahā Vagga Pali*, 2-*Chula Vagga Pali*, 3- *Parajika Pali*, 4- *Pachittiya Pali* and 5-*Pariwara Pali*.

The Doctrine of Buddha could be classified into three divisions or baskets which is the meaning of the word *Pitaka*. They are *Sutta Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* which could be further reduced to the Law and Discipline. *Tipitaka* meaning literally three baskets, is the word for the whole of the *Dhamma*.

The Buddha, addressing monks, declared that Venerable Upali was foremost for the knowledge of the *Vinaya*. What he had aspired under Padumuttara Buddha so many kalpas ago became realised.

As the first Buddhist Sangha Council was held three months after the passing away of the Blessed One, it was Upali Maha Thera who gave to the world the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

*For Discipline none is so great,
His birth in the Order was laid,
His word had the greatest weight,
When Vinaya was relayed.*



DISABILITY, ILLNESS, AND DHARMA: A TALE OF THREE LIVES

by Lynn Merrill Weyman

“

A personal journey in discovering Buddhism

”



Every morning when I awaken, before my mind starts its usual churning, I breathe five times, sweeping quickly up and down the length of my body. In/out, up/down, I count the exhalations. This practice of mindful concentration – the fact that I can coherently follow these steps – lets me know that I am in the present moment and not lost in some intensely vivid dream. My pulse and heartbeat clue me that I am alive for another day in this familiar realm. Again for another day, I embrace Dharma teachings as guiding principles that direct my experience.

I am not a devout practitioner. I wouldn't even call myself a disciple. I am merely a stumbling beginner. My initial experience with Dharma practice – the Three Jewels, right view, and meditation – occurred some five decades ago. In Miami, Florida, I encountered a small group of people dedicated to “Mahayana yoga” and joined their community. At the time, I did not completely appreciate the lives of my friends. Their silent retreats, raw vegan foods, and laudable service to the local community were unfamiliar, almost incomprehensible. But life has a way of knocking one on the head; the knock may not lead to enlightenment, but it may at least shove one toward the path. For me, however, the path took many turns due to several traumatic events.

Roughly twelve years ago, at the age of 46, I suffered a back injury that kept me mostly bed-ridden for nearly a year. I had just gone back to college as a “returning student” with steadfast determination to complete my degrees, starting with my Bachelor's. With the unstinting help of my partner, I managed to attain this goal. But for months on end, the pain was relentless. What was initially acute pain turned into chronic pain, and I could no longer move or sit without a great deal of discomfort. I discovered the truth of dukkha (distress) first hand. This was samsara, the wheel of suffering. I was convinced of the truth of the Buddha's teachings but not yet ready to actualize the wisdom he and so many others imparted.

Two years after the back injury, I was diagnosed with a rare gastrointestinal cancer. This terrifying diagnosis was compounded by the fact that my father died from colon cancer at the age of 57. His two-year decline was

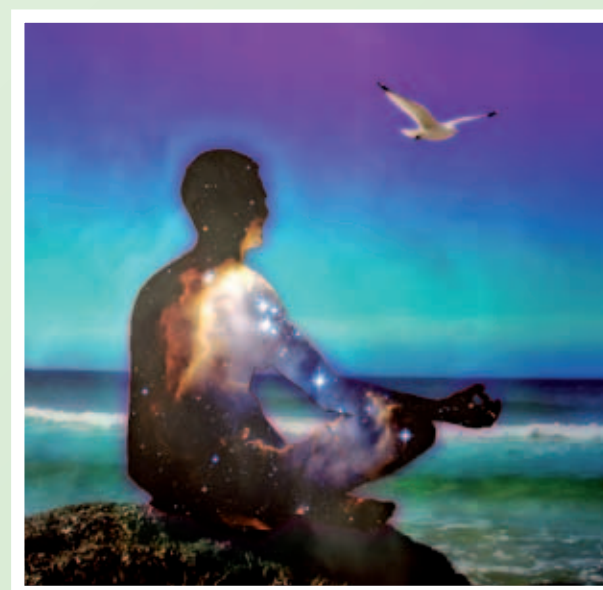
tortuous, starting with delayed diagnosis, through ineffective treatment, to an excruciatingly painful death. When I received a diagnosis of Stage 3 cancer with nodal involvement, I thought it was karmic retribution and envisioned an abbreviated future. At this point, I had begun my graduate studies and was uncertain about completing my Ph.D. I remember crying uncontrollably for weeks and screaming at a colleague over the phone. How could my doctor deliver the news of a malignant diagnosis in a phone message? The treatment – chemo, then radiation therapy – was harrowing. How could my suffering assuage the assault of karma?

While going through cancer treatment in San Diego, I was referred to a nearby Buddhist group. The hospital social workers said that mindfulness practice was a good way to deal with all that had occurred. But any mindfulness practice I might have had completely disappeared.

For several years after radiation, I experienced mystifying and debilitating gastrointestinal symptoms. My doctors initially suspected it was radiation-induced damage. My body was thin, frail, anaemic, and exhausted. After many specialists and many tests, I was diagnosed with celiac disease (CD). CD is an auto-immune disorder in which the body cannot digest the gluten found in wheat, barley, and rye and attacks itself. These foods became lurking enemies, with the world divided between “safe” and “unsafe.” Not only was a slice of bread off-limits, but even the facility where the bread was baked. Not only was a piece of chocolate risky, but also the delicate flour dust on the wrapping. Pasta, once a staple, was unapproachable. I thought that my condition might be the karmic consequence of my odd propensity as a child of hiding bakery goods in my bedroom dresser drawers. The doctors assumed that I had inherited the disease from my father. Previously dormant, the disorder had been exacerbated by the radiation. My studies languished as I grappled with major health challenges.

The most recent knock on my head, quite literally, came two years ago when I suffered several Grand Mal seizures. I awoke in a hospital, not knowing how I got there, unable to recognize my partner of 13 years, not even sure what a partner was. After I was released from the hospital, I could not even make coffee, a task I had completed

thousands of times. I could not indicate the correct time on the face of an analog clock, nor could I recognize depth perception in a cube.



Driving was forbidden – my license was taken away in the hospital. My body slept for a month straight, while my brain had dreams so vivid that I was convinced of their illusions. Reality became delusional. The seizures had also wiped away my memory from the previous three years or so. I was convinced that I had not seen some friends in years, when it had only been a matter of weeks. Conversely, I was convinced I'd been in recent contact with people I'd actually not spoken to for a decade or more. I could not remember one thing about a trip I'd taken to Uruguay only weeks before the seizures.

Everything was foreign. I had literally lost myself, and the recovery of my identity has been a strange, ongoing journey. As I write this, I am exercising vestigial muscles, much like reciting a mantra. Prior to my seizures, I had been clinically depressed. Chronic back pain and cancer had taken the spark of life out of me. While chronic pain tests one's endurance, chemotherapy is unmistakably a form of lethal poisoning, pushing the body to the brink of demise. Radiation, a poison in its own right, may give rise to other forms of cancer. Grand Mal seizures are a form of petite mort. During seizures, the body stops breathing. Limbs become clenched and rigid, as in rigor mortis, the third stage of death, when chemical processes in the muscles slowly come to an end. Yet, while consciousness ceases during seizures, brain activity does not, and it can be quite intense. Amnesia often results from this natural form of electric shock therapy. My brain scans revealed a pattern of lesions suggestive of multiple sclerosis (MS), an autoimmune disorder in which the body erodes sheaths covering the central nervous system of the brain and spinal column. This news was the last blow. Wrung inside out and in tatters, I had finally arrived at the temple gate. At last, I was ready to receive the Dharma.

In San Diego, I was referred to a nearby Buddhist group. The social workers said that mindfulness practice was a good way to deal with all that had occurred. This community has continued to sustain and encourage me up to this day.

Dukkha (distress) takes many forms. Clinging is a persistent form of *dukkha* – longing to grasp the ungraspable. *Anicca* (impermanence) is another form. Many years ago, it was just a concept, but as I returned to the texts, it began to make perfect sense. Memory is fallible, but living in the present moment with wisdom became a corrective. Oddly enough, post-seizures, the veil of depression had lifted. I eagerly embraced the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. *Dukkha*, I learned, was not personal. Being born into this world is a gift involving causes and conditions. My *dukkha*, I learned, was not unique, nor was it mine, per se. I had been clinging to greed, hatred, and delusion based on the illusory concept of “self.” But clinging to the notion of inherent identity had only held me captive and isolated.

Gradually, my attachment to the illusory “self” became weaker, as the Dharma pointed to a healthier understanding of self-awareness. I began a daily meditation practice and joined the local Buddhist sangha, understood today in North America as a community of fellow practitioners. As we recounted our different experiences on and off the cushion, one common theme became apparent. *Dukkha* is pervasive and touches everyone's life in some way. *Karma*, I came to learn, is simply cause and effect. It is we who complicate our lives through misconceptions, misinterpretations, and the imposition of opinions and judgments. Renunciation, letting go of the illusory “self” and accepting the fleeting nature of this vast universe, is the key to contentment. Dharma replaces the “I, me, mine.”

To say that Dharma and mindfulness have touched every aspect of my life is an understatement. I take seriously those Buddhist precepts that urge the cultivation of compassion and wisdom; I necessarily started

small. Surveying the tangible objects of my journey thus far, I reflected on the baskets and pottery I've collected over the years. Created by indigenous communities throughout the world, some have travelled with me for decades. Some began as twigs and branches, meticulously selected, steamed or soaked, then bent into shape; others began as clay I witnessed being carved from the earth. I pondered the many hands that made them. My closets and drawers were filled with wondrous textiles that I barely remembered collecting. Numerous books told me where my mind has been. But this is not who I am anymore. Accruing and clinging to objects is one way we attempt to reinforce our constantly shifting identity, but these are merely impressions, not reality. Winnowing these possessions has been a profound practice of *dana* (generosity), giving away whatever I truly do not need.

Practicing *ahimsa* (non-harm), I value the life of all sentient beings. A “have-a-heart” trap allows me to catch wayward mice, then relocate any furry interlopers to the fields and release them. I try to focus on right thought, right speech, and right action, but habitual *kilesas* (destructive emotions) are deeply rooted, and sometimes I utter unskillful words. My little dog, Alice Lucille, keeps me mindful of these precepts. If I say such a word in a fit of unskillful emotion, she senses my distress and comes running. She leans her body weight into one front paw as she places that paw on my arm or thigh, expressing concern and offering comfort. This reminds me that the power of right speech and right intention must be carefully cultivated.

Slowly, I was able to get back to work. Fortunately, the seizures did not affect the language center of my brain. Still, it's taken a few years to regain the confidence to write, edit, and find my own voice. To hear someone's voice on the page requires skillful listening, balancing the flow of the words with the wisdom to discern

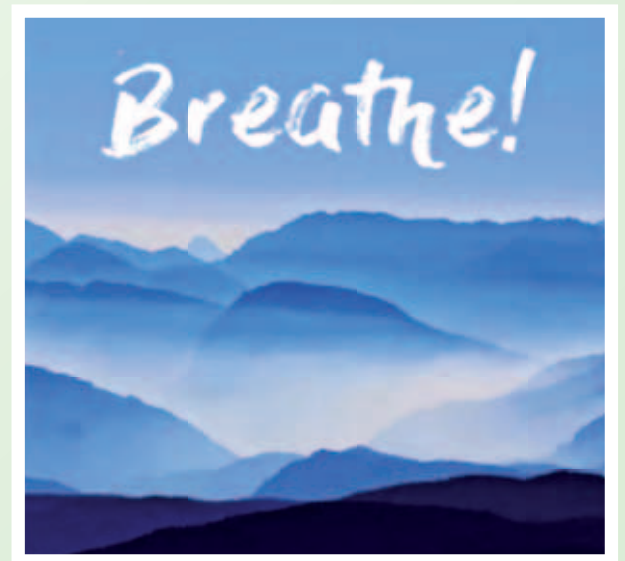
the intent. This is not a contradiction. The written word has a voice and to hear it we must practice the art of letting go. Mindfulness and meditation practice are crucial in this process.

Day by day, the simple act of breathing amazes me. Practicing mindfulness of breathing (*satipatthana*), I relish following my breath. Our breath is the gift of life. Practicing insight (*vipassana*), I see the body (*kāya*) as a sacred temple for gaining understanding. Our breath recalls the breath of the Buddha, rejuvenating us like water recycled in the atmosphere. Water stains in the house no longer annoy me. They are precious reminders of impermanence (*anicca*).

Dukkha arises from expectations about the outer world. Dharma insists that we are responsible for our actions and that we do the inner work required to change. I am heartened by the words of wise teachers who enrich my knowledge. With infinite wisdom and compassion, the Buddha's awakening indeed changed the world, most importantly from within. I want to follow his lead.

Source:-

<http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/2018%20Sakyadhita%20Newsletter.pdf>



WHEN YOU ARE ON RETREAT

by Ajahn Sumedho

If you never awaken the mind, but merely live a perfunctory life based on the momentum of your habits acquired when young, then as you get older, those habits become less vital but more entrenched. The force of habit is like a cage; it is something that imprisons you. People talk a lot about freedom in the sense of being physically able to do what one wants. And yet that kind of freedom can lead to slavery—we can become addicted, habituated, to various unskilful actions, attitudes, and tendencies that we never see through or get beyond.

That is why, sitting here on a zafu [meditation cushion] for a week or so on retreat, is like an incarceration. You are told to keep silent; you are not to go out and play games, dance and sing, or run around the fields, play football, cards, dress up and make yourself alluring, or listen to music. The most exciting thing that happens in this situation is the arrival of dessert sometime in the afternoon.



When you are on retreat, restrictions are placed on your physical actions and speech. But there are also mental restraints and limitations. You are not to simply let your mind go wild or indulge in fantasies. Instead, you are to learn to bring the mind into the present. It goes off into tirades, into its habits, fantasies, or obsessions, and you gently bring it back to the here and now, to the body, the breath, the silence. This is a gentle way of centring and bringing attention to the present. And it is the ultimate kind of restriction. You sit here in the present, in the here and now, and sometimes that does seem like tying yourself down.

On the other hand, this is freedom—you are not just a helpless victim of habits, thoughts, desires, or fears; it is a way to contemplate, to develop, to cultivate, and to understand this experience of human consciousness, human existence. This is what we've got. We contemplate the existential reality of this moment.

On the conventional level we are all here in this room sitting together. In terms of the way it is, however, you are actually in my mind. I don't really mean 'my' mind, but this is the limitation of speech. The room is 'in my mind'. My eyes and the light



in the room allow me to see, and that is a conscious experience—eye-consciousness. You, then, are in the conscious experience. You can see me, but I cannot see me as an object. I can see bits of my knees and so on, but the full view of me I cannot see. For each one of us, this is the axis mundi; it is the centre point in the universe. Each one of us is the centre of the universe in terms of direct experience in the present. This is a reflection on the way it is. It is not an ego-trip. One doesn't say, 'I am the centre of the universe,' as a person. That would not be a reflection, but a perception which one might foolishly grasp. As far as your experience

goes, however, in terms of conscious experience you have always been the centre of everything, from the time you were born until the time your body dies—it is the way it is. The rest of us come and go. You all come into and go out of my consciousness. And when you are all gone, I am still here, wherever that may be. Even if I go, I am still wherever I am.

Noticing this centre point is very important. One is conditioned into perceiving oneself as a personality, as being another person in the room, and one's consciousness as being in the brain, maybe, or in the head. If we never question, never investigate, all the views we have about ourselves—our bodies, our personalities—we just operate from an attitude of ignorance. Having not awakened to and examined the way things really are, we operate in the realm of conventional agreements.

We can all agree to certain conventions, and each particular culture has its own unique quality. Why, for example, are the English not exactly the same as the French? Why is it that all the French are not exactly the same? And why are the Americans different from the English, not to mention the Chinese, Russians, Thais, and Sri Lankans? The assumptions that we acquire, say, when we're growing up, come from the prejudices of our particular ethnic, social conditioning. So, if you were born in Yugoslavia, you would think of yourself as Yugoslavian, although that term is passé now, isn't it; they are back to smaller ethnic identities. Whatever, angst and prejudice is derived from attaching to identities because that is not the centre of the universe. Being a 'Croat' or a 'Serb', an 'American', or anything else, is to operate from a biased view.

What brings us on a meditation retreat? In a situation like this you can begin to recognise the spiritual aspiration of your life, something very good. Something very beautiful inside brings you to a place



where you will have to suffer, go through the physical torments of sitting still and of facing the mental obsessions and fears that arise. But there is a willingness to do that. Why? Because, basically, human beings are spiritually oriented beings. When we contemplate humanity in this way, we begin to see everyone has the same potential. It is possible, then, to look at each other in terms of being spiritual beings rather than as being English, French, German, Japanese, or whatever.

Source:-

<https://buddhismnow.com/2013/11/04/when-you-are-on-retreat-by-ajahn-sumedho/>

About the Writer:-

Ajahn Sumedho born Robert Kan Jackman (July 27, 1934) is one of the senior Western representatives of the Thai forest tradition of Theravada Buddhism. He was abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, UK, from its consecration in 1984 until his retirement in 2010. A bhikkhu since 1967, Sumedho is considered a seminal figure in the transmission of the Buddha's teachings to the West.

OFF THE BEATEN TREK - A Sri Lankan Pilgrimage with a Difference

10 -18 August 2019

THE BACKGROUND

BMV have been using commercial tour agents to organise pilgrimage tours since 2010 where groups have been on regular pilgrimages to India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia. Bhante K Siridhamma Thero who had been leading these tours was consulted and he agreed to an innovative idea by Bro Leslie Jayawardena to plan and organise a Pilgrimage Tour unlike any other for our devotees.

THE TOUR

Everything was systems go and the pilgrimage finally took off when 22 participants flew to Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10 August 2019. Met on arrival at the airport by Bhante K Siridhamma Thera and Bro Leslie (who had flown in a day earlier) – a warm welcome greeted the participants – they were garlanded and treated to a traditional Sri Lankan welcome with dancers and musicians. Their adventure had begun. Bro Leslie informed all participants that this was a tour of Sri Lanka with a difference – the participants will get to ride in a tuk-tuk, bus, boat, catamaran, train and

tractor; visit ancient old temples and Buddhist sites, offer morning and lunch dana, visit orphanages and pirivenas, there will be time for prayer, meditation and self-contemplation, swim in the Indian Ocean, have a vegetarian lunch in a traditional Sri Lankan village and shop till they drop.

The participants returned home on 18 August 2019 - happy, refreshed, with good memories and new friends. They had been to places even many Sri Lankans haven't been before.

Everyone is now looking forward to the next **Off The Beaten Trek – Pilgrimage with a Difference 2.0.**

*Report by Bro Leslie Jayawardena
Hon Secretary, Buddhist Maha Vihara*



Day 1-Welcome dance at Colombo Airport.



Day 2-Exploring the canals of Muthurajawela Mangroves at Negombo.



Day 2-Blessing service at Sripathi Temple.



Day 2-Posing with the children of the Sripathi Orphanage. They generously contributed towards the gifts for the children and novice monks of the temple.



Day 2-Group picture with Ven Pamaratana Thera and his mother before leaving for Athugala.



Day 2-At Athugala Samadhi Buddha Image, Kurunegala.



Day 2-Veneration at Avukana Buddha Image.



Day 3-At the top of Pidurangala Rock.



Day 3-Pidurangala Buddha statue.



Day 4-Puja and Meditation at Aluvihara, Matale.



Day 4-Getting individual names written on Ola leaves, Aluvihara, Matale.



Day 4-With Bhante Dhammananda from Bairawakanda, Kandy.



Day 6-Took a train from Nuwara Eliya to Ella. At Ella train station.



Day 6-Fullmoon Puja at Dhowa Raja Maha Vihara.



Day 7-Exploring the rock carvings at Moneragala area.



Day 8-Breakfast Dana Offering at Kasagala Raja Maha Vihara.



Day 8-Feeding a baby elephant at Kasagala.



Day 8-At 2000 year old Kasagala Raja Maha Vihara.



Day 8-Robe Offering at Sunandaramaya Temple Kotewila.



Day 8-Group shot at Kotawila Temple.

IS MINE BIGGER THAN YOURS?

by Charles R. Johnson

Charles Johnson explores our endless capacity to compare ourselves to others, and the Buddha's antidote to trying to measure up.

Every day I lurk and listen to scholars of Eastern religions on the academic forum 'Buddha-L', taking notes when their exchanges clarify some arcane matter of Pali grammar or touch upon sutras I feel I should study. One day the forum's moderator, scholar Richard Hayes, provided an examination of the meaning and implications of the Sanskrit word *māna* that I found insightful. *Māna* is a Buddhist term that may be translated as 'pride', 'arrogance' or 'conceit'.

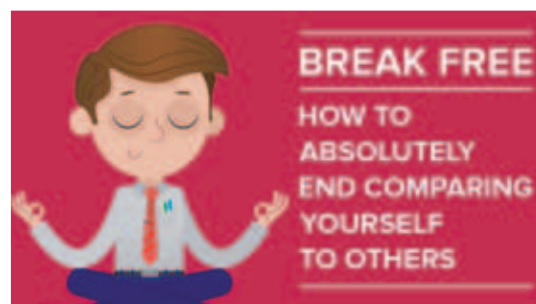
"According to certain Abhidhamma traditions," wrote Hayes, "one of the last obstacles that a person overcomes on the road to liberation is *māna*, usually translated as pride... In Abhidhamma literature, *māna* is described as the tendency to think in one of three ways: 1) Thinking of oneself as better than others; 2) Thinking of oneself as inferior to others; and 3) Thinking of oneself as equal to others... The Sanskrit word is derived from a verbal root that means to measure. So *māna* is the act of measuring, or perhaps comparing. It is the kind of thinking we do when we wonder, whether to ourselves or out loud, 'Is mine bigger than yours? Is mine as good as yours?' Abhidhamma is right, I think, in pointing out that all of us who are not arahants (and I'm guessing that would be several of us on 'Buddha-L') are busy measuring ourselves against the standards set by others."

Hayes added, "Having acknowledged that we are all prone to looking around to see how well we stack up in comparison to others (for we are, after all, social animals, and we learn best by imitation) and whether we're still okay in the imagined eyes of other beholders, even those we pretend to disregard, I think one can cultivate the habit of focusing so much on flaws that one fails to see what is good in things."

"We do not judge these thoughts and feelings, or ourselves for having them. We don't embrace them or run from them."

Every dimension of our lives—personal and professional, even our miscellaneous list of "likes" and "dislikes"—is saturated with *māna*. From our earliest years of receiving grades that measure our academic progress to the promotions we strive for in our jobs, *māna* is an activity we engage in every minute of every day.

If we did not do this measuring in the realm of conventional reality, we would be unable to function socially or practice "right effort" when we see our discipline becoming lax. But *māna* can be spiritually damaging to others and ourselves (I'm thinking of an interview in which the Dalai Lama was asked, "How shall we deal with self-hatred?" He found the question so confounding—almost an oxymoron for a Buddhist who knows an enduring "self" is an illusion—that he asked the interviewer to explain what in the world "self-hatred" could possibly mean); and it is at odds with the precepts that we "Do not speak of others' errors and faults" and "Do not elevate self and blame others."



Fortunately, in the Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta ("Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness") the Buddha offers an antidote for *māna* that I have found to be infallible: namely, "contemplating mind as mind... mind-objects as mind-objects." The mind, being the exotic phenomenon that it is, churns out thoughts and feelings 24/7 that are wholesome and unwholesome, kind and unkind. We have to sit patiently with this extraordinarily colourful mind (and ourselves). All manner of thoughts and memories arise: "That hurts," or "That was nice"; "I'm great," or "I'm a loser"; or as we read in the Dhammapada, "He abused me; he beat me; he defeated me; he robbed me." We do not judge these thoughts and feelings, or ourselves for having them. We don't embrace them or run from them. We simply let them be, observing how—like all impermanent things—they are ephemeral, transitory, like bubbles in a stream, rising and fading away. A feeling of anger at someone might arise, but we know that we are not this anger. If we do not grasp at it or cling to it, its energy will dissipate. And as we inspect each mind-object, we are free, of course, to pursue those that are wholesome, kind, and enable us to alleviate the suffering of others, allowing those thoughts to become actions.

"As we contemplate ourselves and others, the Buddhist approach is to do so with egoless listening to how the 'other' presents herself, phenomenologically, to us moment by moment. Another name for such selfless listening is love."

The result of this practice is an opening of one's heart to others, and to ourselves. It also leads to "epistemological humility," which is a healthy scepticism about what we think we know. For example, last spring my wife and I celebrated our fortieth wedding anniversary. I have known her since we were twenty years old. I have seen her change over more than four decades. I know her as a friend, mother, confidante, a spiritual seeker, a former teacher and social worker. I know her medical history and the results of her DNA testing. I know her human birth to be a blessing unknown to either gods or hungry ghosts. But I can never know all her thoughts, feelings, and experiences, even after a lifetime spent together. Do we ever truly know another well enough to judge them as better, equal, or inferior to ourselves when each of us is, ontologically, a ceaseless play of patterns—physically, emotionally, perceptually, and in respect to consciousness? I think not. To some degree, the "other" remains a wonderful mystery that ever outstrips our concepts, feelings, and perceptions of her. My wife, therefore, is always new and surprising to me. We can say the same about ourselves. And in the face of such mystery, as we contemplate ourselves and others, the Buddhist approach is to do so with egoless listening to how the "other" presents herself, phenomenologically, to us moment by moment. Another name for such selfless listening is love.

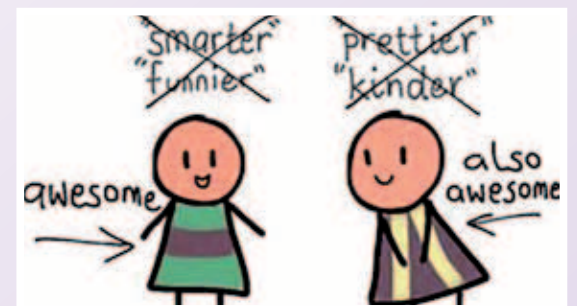
This, I believe, is what is meant in the statement that, "You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."

Source:-

<https://www.lionsroar.com/is-mine-bigger-than-yours/>

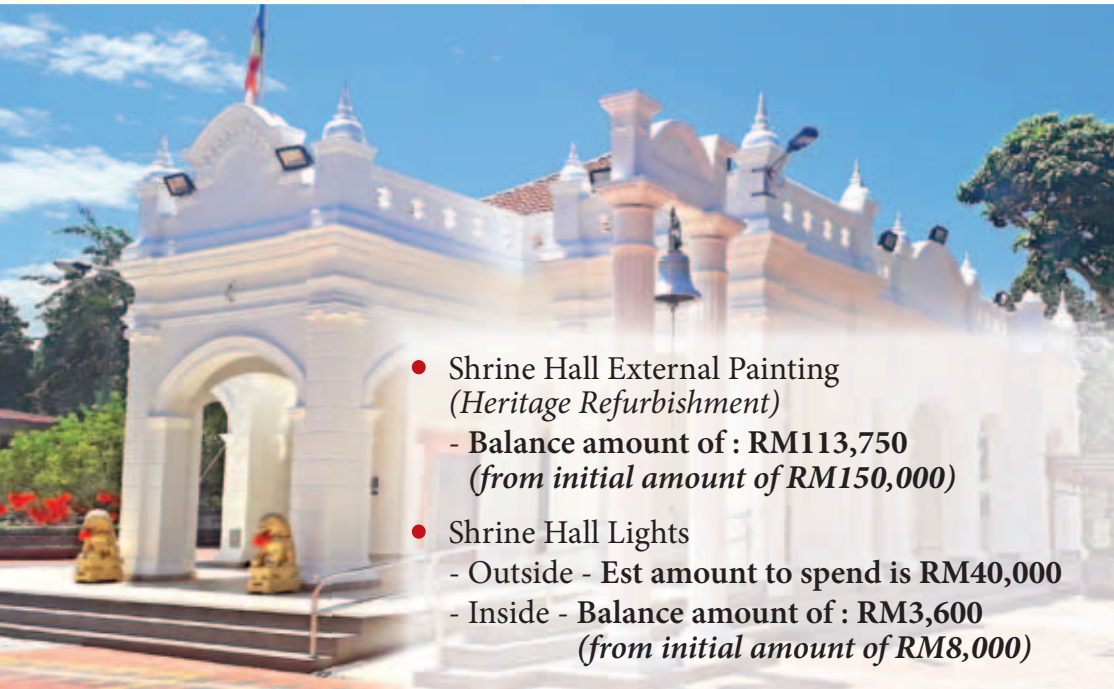
About the Writer:-

Charles Johnson is the author of *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice*.



LEND A HAND

The Buddhist Maha Vihara “Lend A Hand” programme is to support the undertaking of a number of crucial projects that are needed for continuous maintenance and upgrading for the benefit of all devotees. We appeal to your kind generosity to help us realize the following:



- Shrine Hall External Painting (Heritage Refurbishment)
 - Balance amount of : RM113,750 (from initial amount of RM150,000)
- Shrine Hall Lights
 - Outside - Est amount to spend is RM40,000
 - Inside - Balance amount of : RM3,600 (from initial amount of RM8,000)



- Vehicle for Transport
 - Est : RM80,000

- Replacing the 56 Buddha Statues' Huts with stainless steel panels/ tampered glass.
 - Balance amount of : RM22,080 (from initial amount of RM24,800)



BUDDHA FRIEZE FOR SPONSORSHIP AT MEDITATION PAVILION



- Seated Buddha Frieze
 - RM18,000 each
 - 39 statues left to be sponsored



- Standing Buddha Frieze
 - RM38,000 each
 - 5 statues left to be sponsored



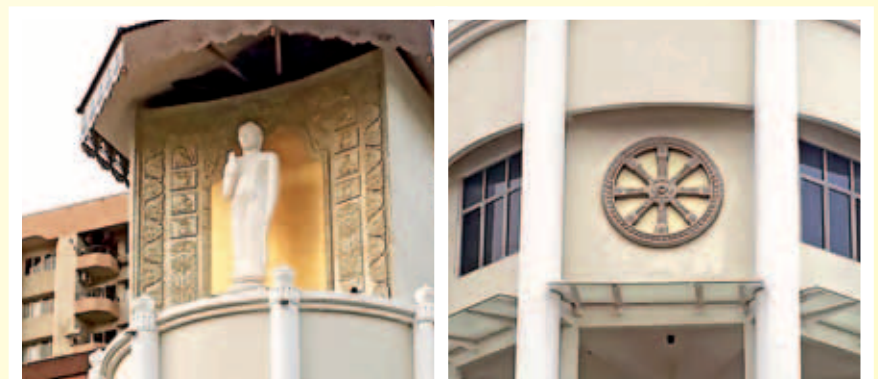
25 Lotus Pillars

A total of 25 Lotus Pillars named after the Buddha's core teachings are available for sponsorship at the Wisma Dharma Cakra building at RM25,000 each. Names of the Sponsors will be placed on the pillar.

- *Ground Floor – 2 pillars
- *Mezzanine Floor – 18 pillars
- *First Floor – 5 pillars



- Supply and Install Visual System at 1st Floor, Puja Hall
 - Estimate Cost:- RM 25,850.00
- Meditation Cushion with Cushion
 - Big 2ft x 2ft @ RM65 x 66 nos = RM4290
 - Small 10x14x46mm @ RM55 x 106 nos = RM5830
 - Total Estimate Cost :- RM10,120
- Wireless Head Set Microphone
 - Estimate Cost :- RM 3,300
- Tabletop Gooseneck Microphone system
 - Estimate Cost :- RM4,800.00
- Mobile Stage with Skirting and staircase
 - Estimate Cost :- RM7,700
- 10-seater Round Tables
 - Quantity – 50
 - Estimate Cost :- RM9,000
- Skirting for Banquet table
 - Quantity – 100 tables (6ft x 2ft)
 - Estimate Cost :- RM9,500
- Dharmacakra Wheel at Wisma Dharma Cakra Building
 - The exclusively designed Dharmacakra Wheel has been completed and installed at the tower of the Wisma Dharma Cakra. Made in concrete, the total cost came up to RM300,000. A single donor has generously given RM100,000 and now BMV would be most appreciative if more Donors can come forward to off-set the remaining RM200,000. The Dharmacakra Wheel symbolises the name of the building, Wisma Dharma Cakra.



A brief history of the 125 year old Buddhist Maha Vihara, Brickfields

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but was financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities as well. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine Room, with its ceremonial laying of the foundation-stone taking place on 25th August 1894 and the simple rectangular shaped building completed sometime during the first decade of the 20th century. The donors for the Shrine room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg 408 were clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilise the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening of the then controversial film "Light of Asia" in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented

Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Governments which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications programme as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 28 languages, with millions of copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organised by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programmes, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies in centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on

matters effecting non-muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several forty foot containers equivalent of relief aid were dispatched by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaigns carried out by the Vihara. The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers, donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, that is Venerable. Dr. Kirinde Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thero.



DAILY ACTIVITIES

Mon - Sun

- 6.30am - 7.30am
- 11.30am - 12noon
- 7.30pm - 8.30pm

Daily Morning Buddha Puja
Daily Noon Buddha Puja
Daily Evening Buddha Puja

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Mon, Wed, Thurs

- 8.00pm - 10.00pm

Tues

- 10.30am - 12.00noon
- 8.30pm - 10.00pm

Thurs

- 7.30pm - 9.00pm

Fri

- 1.00pm - 2.00pm

Sat

- 8.00pm - 9.30pm
- 8.30am - 10.30am
- 9.30am - 11.30am
- 10.30am - 11.30am
- 7.30pm - 8.30pm
- 8.30am - 9.30am
- 9.30am - 11.00am
- 9.30am - 12noon
- 10.00am - 11.30am
- 10.00am - 2.00pm

Sun

- 11.00am - 12.30pm
- 1.30pm - 5.00pm

Meditation Class

Senior Club Yoga for Beginners

BMV Choir Practise

Senior Club Yoga for Intermediate

Afternoon Puja & Talk

Dhamma Talk

Qigong Practise

Sanskrit Class

Tai Chi Practise

Bojjhanga Puja

Morning Puja

Abhidamma Class

Sunday Dhamma School Session

Dhamma Talk

Traditional Chinese Medicine (Every Sunday except Public Holiday)

Pali and Sutta Class

Sinhala Language Classes

Sinhala Cultural Dance Classes

Dhamma for the Deaf (fortnightly)

Diploma & Degree in Buddhism Classes

Feeding the Needy and Homeless

You can donate towards our many projects :

- Dhammadutta
- Free Buddhist Publications
- Welfare Activities
- Monks Dana
- Sunday Dhamma School
- Maintenance of Shrine Hall
- K Sri Dhammananda Library
- Temple Lighting
- BISDS Building Fund

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY :

- Cash (at the BMV Counter)
- Cheque (made payable to "BISDS Building Fund")
- ATM Transfer / Direct Bank-in (Bank Acct : BISDS Building Fund, A/C No : CIMB 86-0011008-6. Please send the bank-in slip to info@buddhistmahavihara.org)

Payments can be made via :

- BMV Office Counter** : Cash, cheques & credit cards
- Postage** : Make cheques payable to "Buddhist Maha Vihara" & write your name & contact telephone at back of the cheque.
- Direct Debit** : Hong Leong Bank Brickfields
Acct : 292-00-01161-8

BMV Statement of Accounts :

Buddhist Maha Vihara's Monthly Statement of Accounts is displayed on the Notice Board at the Reception area for public viewing. Please address all queries to the Hon. Secretary in writing.

We accept VISA and MASTERCARD for donations. Thank You.

Donations to Buddhist Maha Vihara operations are tax exempt.

Any donor who wants a tax exemption for computation of personal or corporate tax can request for a tax exempt receipt.

PLEASE BEWARE OF UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS SOLICITING DONATIONS.

KINDLY ENSURE THAT ALL DONATIONS ARE ISSUED WITH A NUMBERED BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA OFFICIAL RECEIPT.

BMV OFFICE HOURS

MON – SAT : 9.00 am - 9.00 pm

SUN & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS : 9.00 am - 5.00 pm



BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

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